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# COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: TURKMENISTAN

**These recommendations are designed to deliver communication campaigns by mass media, non-governmental organizations, government agencies and religious leaders to prevent violent extremism among the population of Turkmenistan with an emphasis on youth.**

The Team at The Centre for Social and Cultural Design “Gonzo-Design” developed this Strategy at the request of the Centre for Religious Studies within the scope of the Internews implemented Project “Strengthening Resilience to Radicalization and Disinformation in Central Asia” with the financial support of the European Union.

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This communication strategy was produced based on study performed by the Center for Religious Studies from March to December 2020. The study included the content analysis of online platforms in six languages (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, Tajik, and Turkmen) and the field studies in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, which interviewed 4,005 respondents, aged 18-35 to identify the value orientations of Central Asian youth and their media preferences.

Responsibility for the content of the publication lies with the Center for Religious Studies of Kyrgyzstan and “Gonzo-Design”.

The opinions presented in this publication do not represent the official views of the European Union.

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# INTRODUCTION

This communication strategy document represents a system of applied recommendations to deliver media campaigns aimed at PVE among the population of Turkmenistan with an emphasis on youth. The strategy includes eight sections covering all aspects of communication process:

1. goal setting,
2. understanding the audience,
3. formation of messages,
4. understanding stakeholders,
5. review of effective channels and formats,
6. specifics of the context,
7. evaluation of communication efficiency,
8. presentation of potential risks.

The strategy provides an overview of messages, tools, approaches and contextual specifics for applied work among four stakeholder groups: government agencies, NGOs, media and religious leaders. Each group was reviewed based on regional characteristics and analysis of their current activities.

## HOW TO USE THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

The communication strategy structure is based on fundamental principles of the communication model, which can be represented through the following definition:

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**Communication is the process of transferring information from sender to receiver through an environment in which both parties equally understand the information transmitted. A significant portion of information is called content and the outcome of transmission process is a message.**

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Therefore, this communication strategy includes the description of all participants, conditions, and mechanisms of communication. We answer the questions: what is required to broadcast? to whom? under which conditions? and how to achieve the desired effect.

# SECTION 1

## MISSION OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

### **Goals, objectives, and impact.**

This section describes the motives and prerequisites for developing a strategy, including the description of expectations from its results. What kind of desired effects we wanted to achieve and what goals we set? What must happen if all the recommendations described in the strategy will be effectively implemented?

### **Goal**

Strengthening the resilience among youth to radicalization and misinformation leading to violent extremism by supporting the media, civil society, government institutions, religious leaders, and active citizens in Kyrgyzstan. This goal seeks to strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation.

### **Main drivers of PVE:**

1. Improving education of the population,
2. Reducing fragmentation in society,
3. Improving social infrastructure,
4. Developing interaction between the State and citizens.

## **Objectives:**

1. Creating and promoting alternative narratives among groups vulnerable to radicalization.
2. Strengthening the system of cooperation between local and global stakeholders.
3. Increasing the level of media literacy and critical thinking among the TA (Target Audience).
4. Developing communities and strengthening the group identity of the TA based on humanitarian values.
5. Reducing the level of disunity on national, religious, and ethnic grounds due to developed alternative factors to improve the internal ties among TA groups.
6. Popularizing humanitarian values and culture.
7. Promoting social and cultural values for systemic formation of personal identity of the TA.
8. Developing family values and strengthening intra-family ties.

## **Long-term impact:**

This strategy contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by reducing the factors that contribute to VE for the next 15-20 years:

1. increasing the level and quality of life.
2. ensuring access to education for all segments of the population.
3. developing gender education.
4. promoting the processes of self-development and increasing professional competencies and enhancing social activities.
5. reducing the level of inequality within and between countries.
6. ensuring cities and human settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
7. promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

## SECTION 2

# TARGET AUDIENCE

### **To whom do we address the communication?**

Hereinafter target audience is referred to as TA

### **Understanding the project TA will help:**

1. use a suitable channel to communicate with the TA,
2. choose an effective genre and communication style,
3. plan and calculate communication effects and risks,
4. organize relevant promotion mechanisms.

### **The section addresses:**

1. Patterns of information perception among the TA,
2. Important mechanisms of information consumption for the TA,
3. TA value system,
4. Key factors in building credibility to information among the TA.

## Special note on Turkmenistan

There is an extreme lack of research regarding the TA in Turkmenistan. This is due to challenges in accessing information and mechanisms to obtain data in the country. The country has never carried out studies relating to the vulnerability of various groups and their exposure to VE propaganda and recruiting. Such research is impossible to perform even today.

Political and religious factors can be called the least significant in the process of radicalization. TA vulnerability is largely associated with the low level of higher education, the lack of an adequate number of educational institutions, and economic problems (unemployment, inflation, and corruption).

The radicalization process occurs abroad, mainly in Turkey. A visa-free regime as well as similarities of languages, culture, and religion serve as important factors contributing to TA vulnerability specifically for this country.

## Representation of the TA in Turkmenistan

Based on available expert data, we can assume the following key vulnerable groups of the TA in Turkmenistan.

### Types of audiences, which we can review to be more vulnerable are:

#### 1. External labor migrants.

Radicalization among Turkmen youth takes place mainly because of the migration process, which impacts Turkmen migrants. Estimates range from 500-700 thousand to over one million migrants are currently outside the country. This is a huge number for a relatively small country.

The TA deals with streams of alternative information outside Turkmenistan (in Turkey, Egypt, Northern Cyprus, Russia, and other CIS countries), which they lack in their home country.

Turkey is a visa-free country for citizens of Turkmenistan. Russia is not an important destination for labor migrants of Turkmenistan (unlike for the other countries of Central Asia) due to strict visa requirements in place. Turkmen typically travel to other CIS and European countries on student visas.

Turkmen labor migrants fall under the influence of VE ideas through personal acquaintances, where they can access materials in the languages common in countries of migration outflow - in Turkish, Russian, Arabic, etc. Neophytes assimilate this knowledge and ideas and afterwards they import them to Turkmenistan.

## **2. Turkmen who are unable to return to their homeland.**

Since 2014, thousands of Turkmen living in Turkey and other countries were not able to change and receive new passports, since the Turkmen Consulates refused to accept documents by ordering the citizens to return to home country. Turkmen authorities perceive such Turkmen as violators of migration legislation, and in case of their return to Turkmenistan, they will be subject to ban to leave the country for a five-year period. Due to this risk, many Turkmen are not planning to return to their homeland in the coming years. This ever-growing group is also potentially vulnerable to radicalism propaganda.

## **3. Students studying in other countries**

According to rough estimates, there are more than 100,000 Turkmen students studying in CIS countries (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, etc.). There is also a category of students who receive education at Islamic educational institutions of the Middle East (few students study in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, etc.).

It is noteworthy that one can observe not only the spread of radicalism ideas among international Turkmen students, but also a general increase in the level of their religiosity, high interest to Islam, strict observance of religious rituals and requirements. Most began to comply with Islamic norms of behavior only during their studies at universities. This is due to both the influence of Muslim friends (not only Turkmen) and the search for their own identity, which is suppressed in Turkmenistan.

## **Indirect TA groups in Turkmenistan**

The communication process does not occur in isolation and communication effects exist in a continuous and indivisible environment. It is important to not only create a communication product, but also to predict what will happen with the TA after the completion of communication campaigns.

The real action of communication product and particularly in sensitive topics starts when its direct "contact" with the TA ends: when they close the mobile application or browser on their laptop, etc. We must respond to the following questions even we have the most effective and successful communication:

1. What will influence the interpretation of content by the TA?
2. How will the meanings transferred be integrated into the real life of the TA?
3. Who will react to decisions made and actions taken by the TA?

Therefore, we should consider not only the audience which may be vulnerable and at risk of radicalization, but also those groups of people who can influence the TA and impact the formation of values and decision-making, as well as shape the general environment and public sentiments:



## 1. Youth

It is important to reach all young people, rather than focusing exclusively on young people who are viewed by government authorities or implementing organizations as “at risk” of radicalization. The most vulnerable regions are those which adjacent to Ashgabat City and the districts of Ahal Velayat, and Dashoguz and Lebap Velayats, which border Uzbekistan. However, the dissemination of information leading to VE within the country is very difficult due to limitations in the information space.

### Example

**Internet media portal**  
**[www.stopterror.uz](http://www.stopterror.uz)**



Since 2016, the OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Security Service of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and CIRU have been implementing the project “Assisting the Republic of Uzbekistan in Fighting Against Terrorism.” The Project built a separate editorial team and created the information media portal [www.stopterror.uz](http://www.stopterror.uz). This resource publishes online materials aimed at educating the audience on VE. The important tasks of the project are to develop media literacy and critical thinking among young people.

### Pros:

The team of <http://www.stopterror.uz/> applies modern and interactive approaches popular with youth to present the various information and educational materials in Uzbek and Russian. In addition, the content network includes foreign TV programs, feature films, and documentaries, which content is aimed at countering the spread of VE ideas.

## 2. Society as an environment

Passive and active observers who form a culture of attitudes towards both potentially vulnerable members of society and de-radicalized members.

## 3. The older generation

These are family members and close relatives of young people, especially parents. To a larger extent, the study of the TA shows that parents’ opinions influence their decisions and ideas. This cultural feature urges us to fulfill the intergenerational gap and create a single communicative space for several generations at once.

## 4. Citizens of countries of labor and educational migration outflow

Due to the highest level of radicalization that occurs in countries of out migration, it is paramount to account for the environment and society in which labor migrants live.

# SECTION 3

## CONTENT

### WHAT DO WE BROADCAST TO THE AUDIENCE TO ACHIEVE THE PLANNED EFFECTS?

To shape the positive effective narratives, it is necessary to present the desired communication scenario.

#### **Positive scenario to interact with TA:**

1. draw the attention of TA and highlight the messages in information flow.
2. arouse interest of TA in the content.
3. keep TA engaged with the content.
4. build trust and build loyalty to content.
5. lead to an exit point, conveying key meanings and induce planned effects.
6. make TA representative as a carrier and disseminator of messages.

It is interesting enough to trace the points of intersection of such positive scenario with the Lewis Rambo model, which describes the factors of the formation and/or change of beliefs.

- **context:** cultural, historical, political, social, active throughout the entire conversion process, can accelerate or hinder its development.
- **crisis:** a state of personal imbalance.
- **search:** often accelerated by a crisis, the process of finding solutions or rebalancing activities.
- **meeting:** marks the initial contact between the “seeker” and spiritual solution.
- **interaction:** describes the information exchange between the “seeker” and the supporter of the spiritual option.
- **commitment:** includes two important elements, first a series of decisions demonstrating adherence or loyalty to religion; and second, the promised membership or public declaration of faith that cements the status of person as part of a movement.

- **consequences:** the consequences of actions, commitments and decisions made to serve the faith. They are constantly monitored and evaluated.

## MESSAGES

Audience-oriented radical narratives within Turkmenistan have yet to be explored in terms of sources, content, and distribution dynamics. According to preliminary estimates based on an interview with a national expert, radical propaganda on the Internet in the Turkmen language is less developed than in other state languages of Central Asian countries. In 2012-2016, there was a surge in distribution of such materials, followed by a decline later and now most previous materials are no longer available on the Internet. Due to the blocking of social networks and other Internet restrictions in Turkmenistan, such websites which have radical content in the Turkmen language have frequently been visited by Turkmen citizens living outside the country.

### CATEGORIES OF DIRECT MESSAGES BY SEMANTIC GROUPS:

#### 1. POLITICAL

##### 1.1. Responding to violence and its propaganda

To formulate and promote rebuttals to violent campaigns. It is necessary to create an absolute, clear attitude among the TA in relation to the issue of the illegality of violence.

##### 1.2. Developing and promoting political literacy

Accessibility and clear understanding of the global political situation will create the grounds for appropriate understanding and interpretation of real relations and priorities on the world stage.

##### 1.3. Promoting the values of multiculturalism

Coverage of global social processes and achievements (scientific, cultural, social, humanitarian) will enable one to undermine many hostile views about the West, Canada, and China and, as a result, to eliminate destructive and aggressive sentiments towards other states and cultures.

##### 1.4. Promoting the values of ethnic diversity

Strengthening the ideas aimed at acceptance and understanding of other nationalities, peoples and classes will reduce the level of fragmentation and potential for confrontations with other ethnic groups..

## **1.5. Creating, promoting, and popularizing social programs**

TA awareness is rising about real actions and programs aimed at improving the social infrastructure. Implementing discussion formats between the state and society will help reduce the level of trust in provocative planted fake stories in relation to social topics in the information space.

## **2. SOCIAL**

### **2.1. Promoting the values of education and enlightenment**

It is necessary to visualize the relationships between living standards and the level of education and to promote the importance of self-development and education principles. It is important to illustrate the importance of non-religious education, which provides knowledge in many important areas of life: technical, humanitarian sciences, and culture.

### **2.2. Developing identity**

To promote the ideas and values aimed at unification through joint creation, creativity, education, volunteering, lifestyle, and culture. Refutation of the possibility to achieve group identity based on religion and any militant images: a winner, group force, weapons, manifestation of power.

### **2.3. Promoting and building community**

To bring together the TA based on the ideas of brotherhood through positive constructive practices, common everyday interests, and mutual assistance.

### **2.4. Popularizing the idea of a free, healthy society**

To create positive images through the topics of self-development, equality, and justice.

### **2.5. Promoting and identifying the benefits of career growth, personal development, and achievement of goals**

It is necessary to create positive connotations for such concepts as material values to benefit opportunities and results of life.

### **2.6. Promoting an image of successful and positive citizen of the country**

It is necessary to reveal the traits and values of a citizen through everyday behaviors and actions aimed at self-development, mutual assistance, and active social position.

## **3. RELIGIOUS**

### **3.1. Developing friendly and open dialogue with TA representatives**

Currently, there is “unspoken” ban to visit official mosques by young people under 30. Such restrictions block communication with TA and can cause a counteraction. It is necessary to maintain and build a two-way dialogue with TA on social, daily and personal topics of interest to it.

### **3.2. Disseminating basic terms and information about Islam**

To deliver theological education in accessible, understandable, and easy formats and to preserve the integrity and stability of religious ideology and peaceful mission of Islam. A lack of access to systematic knowledge on religious topics in the Turkmen language may increase the TA’s vulnerability to VE narratives.

### **3.3. Promoting humanitarian values of religious teaching**

It is necessary to broadcast an integral system of ethical and moral foundations of human benefactors and society in opposition to militant and destructive messages on VE.

### **3.4. Promoting multi-confessional and religious tolerance**

Denial of discrediting other groups based on religion and attitudes towards religious attributes (wearing a beard, hijab, allaj) or demeanor.

### **3.5. Promoting personality image through true values and good intentions**

It is necessary to develop an understanding of basic values and concepts based on general principles of ethics, morality, and humanism among the TA.

## **4. HUMANISTIC**

### **4.1. Developing the principles of mutual help, empathy, and charity**

To develop the community principles through humanitarian values.

### **4.2. Promoting moral obligations and true values in a positive context.**

### **4.3. Promoting humanitarian and human rights values**

To prevent prosecuting others and justifying violence and aggression against people who violate social and/or cultural norms.

## INDIRECT MESSAGES BASED ON TA PRIORITY VALUES:

Key values are combined into semantic groups according to the principle of commonality of messages aimed at implementing TA relevant values.

### 1. FUTURE, SUCCESS, RESPONSIBILITY

- strong financial position for loved ones (firstly) and for yourself (secondly),
- make a mark on the world,
- personal self-development.

#### 1.1. Stress reducing due to financial instability

It is obvious that the situation with education and employment requires effective decisions and reforms at the State level. However, the objectives of communication include creating an effective emotional background among the TA and increasing the level of optimism in society. Only in an emotionally favorable environment, we may count on the emergence of civic initiatives, aspiration for self-development and mutual assistance, as well as the motivation to improve skills and knowledge.

#### 1.2. Anxiety reducing due to responsibility for financial well-being in the family

Despite the fact that family support and responsibility is an important cultural basis, it is necessary to work with the negative consequences arising among the TA connected with this responsibility: alienation, powerlessness, feeling of not being good enough and successful, etc.

#### 1.3. Escalation and transparency of topics of the future, its presentation, and components

Many ideas linked to well-being and successful future are formed among the TA due to stereotypes imposed by the cultural and social environment, in addition to unconsciously copying the practices that are constantly visible (TV, mass culture, YouTube). It is paramount to make the process of forming values and ideas as conscious and independent as possible. Questions and discussions addressed to TA will help raise the agenda of personal self-determination and reduce the level of stereotypes when developing values. Discussion formats among the TA about the future will also enable maintaining links with youth and strengthening inter-generational ties.

#### 1.4. Developing small-scale and light educational formats

It is necessary to build a system of accessible and resource-intensive educational tools. This will fill the gap between not always available fundamental long expensive education and complete absence of any quick, simple, and applied tools for personal and professional development.

## **2. FEELING NEEDED, VALUABLE, AND LOVED:**

- building your own family,
- make a mark on the world,
- personal self-development.

### **2.1. Developing the culture of volunteering and civic social initiatives**

Participation in social activities and opportunities to be engaged into practicing charity and social activity will significantly develop values that are important for youth communities: mutual assistance, a sense of community and unity (as opposed to a sense of alienation and loneliness), sharing challenges, an awareness and realization of one's own strength and capabilities.

### **2.2. Popularizing the concept of DIY (Do It Yourself)**

The post-Soviet environment and current national agenda, as well as cultural traditions have significant impact on the assessment of personality in isolation from society, family, and country. It prevents developing the ideas on the true value of each person and the importance of small deeds. Such practices can be safe while contributing to a more efficient and active society.

### **2.3. Broadening the understanding of development tools**

Employment and income challenges can be partially addressed if the TA is more aware of potential ways of acquiring professional skills and self-promotion.

### **2.4. Promoting mentorship, motivation, and leadership**

The resources designed for Implementation can significantly be reduced by using existing content on these topics. Costs will thus be limited to translation from foreign languages and distribution.

### **2.5. Promoting beauty and health topics**

Popularizing sporty active lifestyles and involvement of the TA in the agenda of careful attitude towards themselves, not only in terms of aesthetics, but also in terms of investments in their future.

## **3. STARTING A FAMILY:**

- creating your own family,
- sense of duty.

### **3.1. Developing sexual education**

Despite the limitations associated with peculiarities of country context, it is important to look for alternative sources to identify the topics on gender and relations: sports, beauty, health, culture, communication, and self-development.

### 3.2. Developing the culture of cross-gender communication

The availability of clear and visual tools for maintaining connections in society, searching for common ideas and interests, co-creation and like-mindedness will play an important role in the natural process of conscious choice of a partner, and will increase the potential of community for the TA as a whole.

## EMOTIONS AND INTONATIONS

As part of the TA field interviews, we identified the gradations in the TA's emotional-sensitive perception of information. In particular, what sensations and emotions certain types of media products evoke, how they affect the distribution of attention, perception, and motivation to any action.

### Emotional guidelines based on the study of the TA value priorities:

#### 1. Sense of community, non-loneliness, confidence in the future

Recommended intonation tags are calmness, moderate dynamism, cohesion, and compatibility.

Not recommended intonation tags are anxiety, linearity, melancholy, aggressiveness, excessive emotionality, violence, and apathy.

#### Values:

- self-confidence,
- happy family,
- striving for peaceful social interactions,
- approval of others

#### 2. Stability, optimism

Recommended intonation tags are dreaminess, romance, poetry, determination.

Not recommended intonation tags are manufacturability, haste, variability, fragmentation.

#### Values:

- preservation of national traditions,
- make the world better and right

#### 3. Self-confidence, feeling important

Recommended intonation tags are admiration, imagination, dreaminess, activity.

Not recommended intonation tags are envy, haste, comparability.

#### Values:

- self-determination (professional, religious, social),



## Security

Recommended intonation tags are ease, leisurely, family.

Not recommended intonation tags are immensity, suppression.

### Values:

- state, financial, and social stability,
- peaceful and humanitarian values,
- safety,
- safety and integration of labor migrants in foreign territory,
- striving for peaceful social interactions.

## 5. Well-being, success

Recommended intonation tags are spirituality, calmness, naturalness, authenticity.

Not recommended intonation tags are envy, haste, comparability.

### Ценности:

- strong financial position for yourself,
- strong financial position for loved ones.

# SECTION 4

## STAKEHOLDERS

### **Who are the senders of messages?**

In this section, we take a close look at four key categories of stakeholders involved in communication. Each stakeholder has its own limitations and potentials. We will identify the approaches, tools, and resources that are appropriate for each category.

### **Understanding the specifics of potentials and limitations of the project stakeholders will enable to:**

1. Build partnerships and scale up the communication effects.

### **The section addresses:**

1. How to benefit from existing restrictions.
2. What new approaches and principles can be applied in working with the topic.

### **Recommendations for mass media in Turkmenistan:**

1. Enhancing interaction between local government bodies, mass media, educational and cultural institutions.
2. Developing discussion formats on social topics.
3. Developing cross-country partnership with mass media, cultural projects, and NGOs.
4. Promoting content in the Turkmen language in destination countries of migration flows.
5. Developing and supporting volunteering and socially oriented communities among young people.

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- 6.** Promoting ideas and initiatives aimed at expanding the professional network within the framework of national strategy of Turkmenistan to prevent VE.
  - 7.** Developing interaction between Turkmenistan's government agencies and youth organizations.
  - 8.** Strengthening links between regional centers of governance and education.
  - 9.** Developing partnership with media from other Central Asian countries.
  - 10.** Preventing radicalization by government agencies through workshops and conferences.
  - 11.** Searching for alternative methods to develop national ideology through culture, art, and volunteering.
  - 12.** Facilitating cooperation with mass media, NGOs, authoritative spiritual figures from other Central Asian states.

# SECTION 5

## CHANNELS AND FORMATS

### How are messages delivered?

Panorama of current channels and formats will help:

1. Deliver messages to end TA.
2. Develop cross-platform and interdisciplinary communication.
3. Track and count the effectiveness of communication.
4. Maintain long-term relationships with TA.

### This section addresses:

1. What genres and formats are relevant to the TA?
2. How is the information is perceived depending on the product and placement?
3. What stylistic foundations are relevant to the TA?
4. How priorities of attention and confidence are formed with the TA?
5. How to manage the motivation of the TA?
6. What communication habits do TA have?

### Characteristic features of information environment for TA in Turkmenistan:

- Underdeveloped Internet network system. The Internet is available to only 26 percent of the population and regular fees become a serious burden on average family's budget.
- Existing restrictions to access online resources in the country, but there is the possibility to use such resources for the TA outside the country.
- Internet speed in Turkmenistan is the slowest in the world.
- The network of Internet cafes has yet to develop, and this sector is controlled by the state.
- One can observe an increased signal suppression to exclude the chance to broadcast images through webcams along the roads passing through the residential areas adjacent to the Presidential highway in Ashgabat.
- Discussion formats on sensitive political and religious topics are almost absent due to fear of persecution of participants.

- In Turkmenistan, almost all social networks and instant messengers are blocked. One can access them via VPN only, which leads to additional costs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE RELEVANT SOCIAL NETWORKS OUTSIDE TURKMENISTAN IN DESTINATION COUNTRIES OF TURKMEN MIGRANTS AND STUDENTS:**

### **1. Creating and promoting educational formats**

Simple, playful, short educational genres: cards, tests, and stories. It is important to broadcast informative context in an accessible way and thereby make them competitive with entertainment genres. Simplifying educational content will raise awareness about the risks associated with VE activities and make the agenda more mainstreamed and cited.

### **2. Developing discussion formats**

To initiate active participation of TA to talk about neutral, but at the same time, valuable topics from their perspectives: news, interpersonal communications, traditional culture, art, music, foreign languages. Engagement of different TAs in terms of their educational level and progressiveness into joint discussions will reduce the gap between various layers of audience and will create a common information field. This will reduce the level of isolation of vulnerable TA groups and help bridge their gap with progressive representatives of society.

### **3. Community building**

Intensive promotion of topics relevant to TA will contribute to creating an online-friendly environment in which participants will benefit from a platform to form and exchange common interests. The development of online communities will improve the quality of remote communication in society and increase the level of motivation, curiosity, and empathy.

### **4. Popularizing progressive figures**

It is important to make visible representatives from among young people and active citizens who deal with addressing social challenges. Such practices will have a positive impact on the motivation and inspiration of the TA and will make visible private civic initiatives for independent scaling up.

## 5. Increasing in the share of youth topics and formats

It is necessary to build a better match for the content designed for a youth audience. Expansion of youth-interested topics and formats in broadcasting, among other things, will reduce the intergenerational gap.

## 6. Developing segments reflecting the lifestyle

Light and dynamic lifestyle formats that cover the topics of development, self-determination and identity will help the TA reduce the general level of depression and get tools for self-realization and personal development.

## 7. Promoting youth-relevant values related to well-being through educational programs

In particular, the promotion of topics of economic growth, professional development and scientific progress through game, entertainment, and educational formats will meet the needs of TA in terms of value priorities, and at the same time educate the TA on issues essential for planning gender relations.

## 8. Implementing mentorship and motivation formats

Sharing successful stories of active and progressive representatives of the TA and popularizing personal examples. Such formats will encourage self-development, shift the focus of attention from the global agenda to a personal one, motivate a healthy lifestyle, and inspire active social activities.

## 1. STREAMING CHANNELS

Streaming – these are channels in which information is delivered to a user without special demand; a user does not control the information, which is received in a dynamic mode and uncontrolled stream.

**Pros:** there is an intention and motivation at the entry point, it has a permanent audience, certain level of confidence based on commonality after entry; they scale well subject to high-quality and long-term content saturation.

**Cons:** narrow focus, require follow-up

**Examples:** professional communities and groups, YouTube channels, newspapers, and magazines.

Special channels are powerful tools for building communities. They help scale ideas, narrow the gaps between social strata, and give a sense of oneness, which in turn can resist artificially created or negative unions such as VEs.

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### Current special channels in Turkmenistan:

**YouTube channels, online TV channels, vlogs,  
and thematic groups in social networks**

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- These channels are used only by those TA members who are outside the country.
- There is monotony and citation of duplicate content.

### Example

Against the general background we can observe the numerous audio lectures by Rovshen Gazakov, who is quite popular with Turkmen youth studying abroad. There are known criminal cases against Turkmen students who came back from Russia, in whose electronic media they (LEA) discovered Gazakov's audio lectures. Almost all other Turkmen preachers, until recent time have been delivering sermons online and anonymously, and in audio format. In terms of their influence on the audience, they lag far behind Gazakov. Gazakov's "Legacy" includes over 300 audio lectures on Islam and several poems. The main storages of these files are hosted on social network VK.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE THE SPECIAL CHANNELS OUTSIDE TURKMENISTAN (PARTICULARLY IN RUSSIA, TURKEY AND OTHER DESTINATION COUNTRIES OF TURKMEN MIGRANTS AND STUDENTS):

### 1. Engaging and creating user content

### 2. Developing experimental formats at the interface with science and art

### 3. Collaborating with musicians

Due to the high adherence of the TA to musical culture, performers can become key opinion makers and broadcast their views and assessment of VE, both in the lyrics and in open accompanying discussions and interviews.

### 4. Developing discussion formats

To deliver in genres of talk shows and lifestyle stories by inviting experts from the field of culture, history, and traditions, who may indirectly impact the topic of positive narratives and values.

### 5. Promoting young and active people

Popularizing and strengthening the image of established, but not very well-known young active citizens from the regions of the country.

### 6. Developing educational channels and communities

Re-broadcasting educational content from West-originated sources with educational content aimed at developing skills in digital professions and creative industries.

### 7. Popularizing the DIY (Do It Yourself) concept through regional and foreign bloggers

## 8. Developing and promoting the podcast culture genre

Light in terms of traffic and genre close to usual audio content and quite popular radio has high potential for mass targeted message delivery.

## 9. Developing an image and modern stylistic techniques and formats

Using contemporary illustrations and photographs in partnership with universities and young artists.

## 10. Using figurative and non-documentary formats

Use comics and animations to cover real stories on VE. Various visual techniques and mixed techniques reduce the risk for characters and at the same time helps to deliver the content to the TA in the friendliest way.

## 11. Expanding geography and multiculturalism

To produce cross and collaborate on materials with similar media in countries of outflow of migrants. To implement interregional joint projects and initiatives.

## 12. Segmentation of sections and audience types

This will help increase both the audience and its potential interest in new topics. If the TA is involved in one section, it starts showing interest in other topics, since print media have a linear structure. Adapting sections for different types of audience

## 13. Introducing personal stories and examples

## 14. Introducing formats and headings to interact with audience

To organize polls and contests, publish letters and stories from the TA. It will make it possible not only to look at the TA as an object of study and maintain contacts, but also to increase the level of self-confidence and significance.

## 2. PERSONAL CHANNELS

Personal channels are the channels in which we receive information from people who we know directly, and our perception depends on the quality of our relations with them.

**Pros:** Communication participants know each other, they communicate directly, it does not require special inclusion and participation from the TA, it has a high level of trust and emotional attachment, higher degree of involvement and responsiveness, where reputation plays a role.

**Cons:** It requires point of contact, interaction, and constant support.

**Examples:** Chats, instant messengers, chat bots, and professional groups.



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## Personal channels that are relevant for the TA in Turkmenistan:

It is necessary to divide preferences for the use of certain instant messengers by geographic location:

**1. Inside the country.** In fact, the only widespread messenger in Turkmenistan is IMO.IM. The authorities permitted accessing it, since they can control the content of correspondence, while voice communication via IMO has often been unavailable in recent months. There is a small group of Telegram users.

**2. Outside the country. WhatsApp, Telegram.**

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USE OF PERSONAL CHANNELS IN TURKMENISTAN:

### 1. **Creating education channels and public pages on the topics of professional skills, computer literacy, and digital communications**

It is important to combine educational content with applied lessons and materials aimed at developing professional skills and potential employment.

### 2. **Developing thematic event formats for exchange of views and participatory design**

This will create an opportunity for youth to obtain outside institutional mechanisms and build local communities.

### 3. **Expanding online and offline platforms for the TA to engage it into social and economic activities**, such as promoting internships and learning opportunities through supervising the work of professionals, developing mentoring programs, improving career guidance and counselling in schools and Universities, and expanding opportunities for volunteerism and summer programs.

### 4. **Establishing youth solidarity funds**, including small grant systems, to help promote PVE initiatives at the community, local, or grassroots level.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE THE SPECIAL CHANNELS OUTSIDE TURKMENISTAN (PARTICULARLY IN RUSSIA, TURKEY AND OTHER DESTINATION COUNTRIES OF TURKMEN MIGRANTS AND STUDENTS):

### 1. **Creating various forms and communication products aimed at maintaining communication between labor migrants and local communities.**

### 2. **Game formats and instant messengers that bring together migrants of Turkmenistan in countries of migration on general issues and relevant topics. Bringing migrant workers and their families together into sprawling and strong communities is critical.**

3. Creating local social public pages and services in instant messengers for communities of labor migrants. Products that address day-to-day social routine problems and serve the purpose of maintaining community connectivity and continuous awareness. Thematic functional areas can include medical consulting and information, consulting, and assistance to maintain health and personal safety, legal and migration support.
4. News applications or public posts on social networks on topics connecting citizens of Turkmenistan in the context of external migration.
5. Developing and promoting accessible services on migration policy and social applied tools in host countries for labor migrants. To integrate religious education and theology into the platform of such services (in a simple accessible format - audio and video).
6. Developing the channels aimed at popularizing the culture and ethnography of Turkmenistan.
7. Creating public pages and communities to strengthen the integration process of students, based on understandable general student topics: sports, lifestyle, culture, creativity and volunteering.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL TYPES OF CHANNELS:

### 1. Cross-platform

Cross-platform communication broadcasts one system of messages with a unique idea in the format of different products: on several channels and genres. In this way, an ecosystem is built with common messages and values, but it has different means of dissemination and promotion.

What does it provide?

- increases coverage,
- increases recognition and, as a result, trust,
- provokes citation,
- provides a graded system for content engagement,
- covers different layers of the TA.

It is noteworthy that along with homogeneity and integrity of the system of effective messages and favorable narratives, there can be a high variability of genres and communication conditions. A single idea can be embodied in various forms: digital product and events, video and poster, message and lecture.

### 2. Partnership

To achieve effective communication, it is necessary to build models and forms of cooperation both between stakeholders and with other potential partners. By expanding the network of potential alliances, we can increase the impact and spread favorable messages.

### 3. Multiculturalism

In conditions when most vulnerable groups of the TA are outside the country such as in labor migration, the cooperation with other countries and international projects is critical. Despite restrictions imposed on interaction with Western organizations, alternative indirect thematic fields can be used to expand the outreach and impact on labor migrants.

The high potential for effectiveness will be revealed in interaction and joint work with the media in Russia and Turkey, including with cultural educational organizations and mass media. Due to high cultural and informational gap, many projects implemented in outflow countries and aimed at integrating migrants become ineffective, since they largely influence the local audience. If projects and initiatives are created on bilateral partnership, their effectiveness will increase significantly. The potential for trust among migrant community in such sources will be higher; the presence of expertise, support and participation will increase the strength of impact and can significantly affect the existing risks of radicalization in Russia.

#### Example

##### “Don’t be silent”



The project aims to address violence domestically, which is indirectly related to the topic of radicalization. It includes anonymous stories from readers, describes incidents of violence, and statistics, advice from psychologists and expertise on the topic.

##### Pros:

- Private story can inspire other people to overcome the challenge.
- Creating an environment for communication, mutual assistance and problem sharing with other victims.
- Presence of user-generated content has attracted increased attention of the audience.
- Gained greater outreach due to applied tips and tools.
- Contributed to an open discussion, which resulted in eliminating most negative stereotypes.

**Cons:** It has no demonstration of positive outcomes.

## ANNEX 1

This annex represents the theoretical material for understanding the practical recommendations made to each section in the main communication strategy document. Each section of the annex refers to the corresponding section of the main document and contains the theoretical evidence, goals, and objectives, of Sections 2, 3 and 5, the country context, performance evaluation and risks, and glossary.